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(3) Earthly King—"whoever he may be." 776

And a fourth:

(1) Bhagawan.
(2) Bhanmati—(meaning Bhagavati).
(3) Kalka of the "Seven Sisters."
(4) All others who are personally worshipped.

It has been noted that almost without exception the Kols speak of Bhagawan as the highest of all deities. The Supreme Deity of the Munda Tribes of Chota Nagpur is quite uniformly said to be Sing Bonga.[1] Crooke, in his *Tribes and Castes of the North West Provinces and Oudh* noted almost fifty years ago that the Kols knew nothing of Sing Bonga. [71]

This is true of Central India to-day, for Kols have lost any recollection of this name as representing the Supreme Deity. Although Bhagawan is fairly consistently spoken of as the Supreme Being, nevertheless in the life of the Kols he is of small efficacy. He is not likely to pay much attention to Kols and no Kol priest knows how to approach him; only the Brahmins are said to have that ability. Kols have thus no exalted conception of Bhagawan. He is a passive distant Being influenced only by such mediators as Khermai and the like, and even then his actions are thought to be rather unstable and unpredictable. While Kols must without fail make offerings to *devatas* and *devis* yet they never make an offering directly to Bhagawan. If as a last resort an offering should be deemed advisable, a Kol may give a Brahmin a little money and ask him to make an offering and try to influence Bhagawan in his behalf. The very best Kols can do is to sing to Bhagawan. At such a time *bhagat* songs—songs of devotion—are used. Occasionally a *katha* is employed to invoke and praise Bhagawan: a Brahmin is called in and recites sacred stories (*kathas*). This, however, is infrequent among Kols and is practised mostly by higher castes. Again, the *hom* or fire offering, useful on all occasions, may be utilized, and at that time Bhagawan is invoked along with lesser deities. It is the ever-present *devis* who should be taken into account. The first step, according to Kols, is to please them. For example, Khermai, being a mediator between men and the great gods, can influence Bhagawan, but while the latter is more powerful than the *devis* and can overrule them, it is not often that he takes the trouble to do so. [793] 776 782 [533] [538]

Bhagawan is sometimes given the attributes of the lesser *devatas* [753]

[1] Dalton, E. T., *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, pp. 190, 193, 133, 141, etc.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

CHAPTER X

FOLKLORE AND FABLES

538 It appears that on the whole the Kols of Central India are not particularly interested in fables and have but little folklore. The Kols pride themselves mostly on their music and song, and the stories which follow have not been easy to collect. No trace was found amongst them of bards or professional story-tellers. No doubt, however, there is much lore hidden away, but it is not obtained when it is directly asked for; the best account is usually found when the story incidentally comes up. Like most primitive people, the Kol knows more than he willingly reveals. The following stories were collected from Kols and represent stories current today.

539 773 THE ORIGIN OF THE EARTH. Brahma is the creator in the Hindu Triad; associated with him are Siva, the destroyer, and Vishnu, the preserver. Certain Kols indicated that it was Brahma whom they considered as the Creator of this world. In the beginning, everything was water, and there was not a bit of dry land anywhere. Brahma brought the earth into existence as follows. First he took the form of a fish and explored the depths of the primeval ocean. But a fish is handicapped in that it cannot carry anything. So Brahma became a tortoise and from some place beneath the primeval ocean, which he had explored as a fish, the Kols know not whence, Brahma got some mud which he put on his back and brought to the surface. It was from this mud that the earth was shaped.

This story bears a resemblance to the story of the Incarnations of Vishnu. The fish and the tortoise are the first and second respectively of the ten chief *avataras* of Vishnu. But the content is quite different, especially in the case of the fish.

[825] THE ORIGIN OF INSECTS. Kols account for the presence of "insects" such as "snakes, scorpions and wasps" in the following way: Sankara was the greatest of all ascetics. He lived very simply without clothes and covered his body with ashes. The dirt from his body, when it fell to the earth, became alive, and so insects such as those named above came into being.

THE ORIGIN OF PEOPLE. The Kol story does not make clear how the first people came into existence, for they begin with a primitive

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566 426 [124] viously, at which time he incurred a debt of Rs. fourteen for the expenses of the wedding. This was borrowed from a *Thakur* of a nearby village who appeared most glad to lend it to him. Ever since that day this *Thakur* has considered him as his serf, and he is supposed to go daily to him; and even though he has worked for the *Thakur* for the past twelve years he has not cleared the debt and does not believe that he ever will. He is virtually a slave of this man, is on call at any time, and must give him the first work until he no longer requires him. For each day's work the *Thakur* will give him 1½ *seers* of *chana* (usually *Dolichos lablab*) or perhaps the same amount of barley still in the head. Money was never given, nor rice or wheat. This group of Kols in Rewa was a very intelligent one on the whole, but indicated that Rewa State was not a place where one could get more than just the necessary food. As one expressed it: "In Rewa there is no [538] stomach hunger, only money hunger." This appeared to be quite a common expression over a wide area. Food was available there, but no money for the other necessities of life nor for weddings, burials and the like.

339 464 434 In centres like Kymore and Katni where there are large cement works, the majority of the coolies employed in the many types of manual labour are Kols. The work is very hard and the wages are low: usually not more than four annas a day for males and three annas for female workers.

434 [423] Kharara Ghat, the isolated Kol village, is perhaps as independent economically as any Kol group studied by us. It was previously noted that this village controls about eighty acres of land. They say that ordinarily they do not sell the farm products, rather keeping them for the use of the village as well as holding a small reserve for [162] emergencies. The village contains about 135 adult persons and the land farmed takes care of their food. Money for other needs is gained 222 276 434 438 in many ways: during the months of May and June the leaves of the *tendu* tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are picked for use in the *biri* manufacture. The leaves are gathered in the early morning or the evenings, and in the heat of the day the people sit under the trees or on the verandas of their houses and arrange the leaves in bundles of one hundred each, tying them with fibre. These bundles are then sold to contractors at the rate of four annas per hundred bundles. Prices vary somewhat according to the quality and the demand. The Kharara Ghat folk claim that they earn from Rs. 400 to 500 per year from the sale of these leaves.

434 313 Kharara Ghat has other sources of income. The village is situated on a jungly section on the edge of the reserved forest. Wood is

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol A-W37

possessed of the land. As a group they rank toward the bottom of the economic level; and in spite of their being such good workers it appears that there is but little chance for them to earn, in even a moderate way, enough to lift themselves from the pit in which they rest. Their burdens are many and their ignorance is great. And yet they do not worry much; and they have a saying to the effect that, "when there is food in the house why should one go out and labour?"